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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of educational and linguistic criteria that can be used in selecting, structuring, and presenting the content of foreign language instruction. Some emphasis is laid on application of criteria to finnish public school curricula. Educational aspects of the discussion include curriculum, individual needs, and learning theories. Linguistic criteria are covered from sociolinguistic, intralinguistic, and interlinguistic points of view. Implications of all criteria are applied individually to the selection, structuring, and presentation of course content in foreign language instruction. A bibliography is appended. (Author/JB)

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Anna-Liisa Leino

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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RESEARCH BULLETIN

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Preface

I wish to extend my sincerest thanks for the grants I received from the Ministry of Education, the Finnish Academy and the National Board of Schools. These grants made it possible for me to study and do research abroad and to finish writing this report in Finland. I am very grateful to my colleagues, Professor Bernadette Grandcolas, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Vincennes and Professor Raymond Bylinski, Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Strasbourg, for their help and generosity. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Pit S. Corder for a very useful period of study in the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Edinburgh. My thanks are also due to Mr. Reijo Alakurikka, M.A., head of the Office of Teaching Materials for the help I received to write this report.

It has always been a pleasure to be in contact with people working in the Finnish-English contrastive project in Jyväskylä. I am particularly grateful to Professor Kari Sajavaara for his help and generosity. Jarkko Leino, Ph.D. has read the manuscript and given me valuable comments which I appreciate very much. Professor Larry Shaw, University of San Diego, has checked the language of this report for which I am very grateful to him.

Finally I want to express my gratitude to Professor Erkki A. Niskanen for the valuable discussions we have had and for the inclusion of this study in the Research Bulletin series of the Institute of Education.

Helsinki, April 1978

Anna-Liisa Leino

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of the Study 1
1.1. Introduction 1
1.2. Problems 4

2. Educational Background 7
2.1. Curricular Aspects 7
2.2. Psychoeducational Aspects 12
2.2.1. Learning Theories 13
2.2.2. Individual Needs for Foreign Language Learning 21

3. Linguistic Background 25
3.1. Sociolinguistic Aspects 26
3.2. Intralinguistic Aspects 30
3.3. Interlinguistic Aspects 34

4. Content of Foreign Language Instruction 39
4.1. Selecting the Content 40
4.2. Structuring the Content 49
4.3. Presenting the Content 56

5. Discussion 61

Bibliography 65

Appendix 1 75

1. Purpose of the Study

1.1. Introduction

This article is a continuation of previous studies by the writer (e.g. Leino 1975), which concerned the objectives in foreign language instruction in Finland. No attempt was, however, made to deal with the content of instruction, specifically, in those studies, even though the framework offered by the Bloom-Valette taxonomy (Valette 1971) implied the inclusion of content in a rather superficial way. The present study which attempts to correct the aforementioned neglect, has as its wider context the Educational-Aims-Project (Niskanen 1973), in which an attempt is made at present to concentrate on the development of curriculum as well as instructional materials (Niskanen-Leino J. 1977).

The term that linguists, in particular, often use when speaking of the content and material of language teaching is " pedagogical grammar" , which term we shall, however, try to avoid on account of ambiguities inherent in it. First of all the term "grammar" itself has many different meanings (e.g. Lyons 1968; Dictionary 1964; Gwen 1974; Pelosi 1973); the same is true of "pedagogical grammar" as well, which seems to have a wide variety of meanings ranging from

a teacher's manual to all teaching materials (e.g. Allen 1974; Candin 1973; Chomsky 1966; Corder 1973; Saporta 1966; Smith 1974, 1976). Other terms have also been used such as "contrastive grammar" (Smith 1974) and "practical grammar" (Allen et al. 1974). These terms seem either to emphasize the scientific method that is used to arrive at such a "grammar", or the purpose for which it is meant to be used or both. We shall here simply speak of the content, the "what" of language teaching no matter what the method of arriving at it may be.

So far it has mainly been the responsibility of text-book writers and other material producers to solve the problems involved in the content of language instruction. In theory their solutions are based on the official curricula, but since the latter are rather vague and general, they are in practice based on tradition and the experience, knowledge, and intuition of the writers. In spite of the need for information there is not much research done in this field in Finland apart from sporadic textbook analyses (e.g. Falck 1971; Black 1971), which exhibit an ex post facto research design, that is, material has been analysed after it has been produced, which tendency seems to prevail elsewhere, as well (e.g. Noblitt 1972; Candin 1973). Foreign literature dealing with the field is most often limited to the viewpoints of either descriptive linguistics or verbal learning. It is the purpose of this paper to try

to develop a broad enough framework of the content of foreign language instruction which could be made use of by textbook writers as well as curriculum planners before material is produced.

A background to this study is offered by the practical foreign-language teaching situation, in which we have the pupil who is a member of a community which holds certain views about education and has a certain type of educational system. In this situation we also have the target language and its characteristics and the native language of the pupil and its relationship to the target language. This practical situation will yield us two broad areas to be dealt with in the following. They are the educational area, consisting of curricular and psychoeducational aspects and the linguistic area consisting of sociolinguistic, intralinguistic and interlinguistic aspects. Our study of these areas will be based on literature and previous research. The purpose is to look for foundations for developing criteria of the content of foreign language instruction. If the contribution of this study, as far as clear-cut criteria are concerned, is restricted, we, at least, hope to have increased awareness of the problems and laid foundation for further research.

1.2. Problems

When formulating the problems of the present study we have to give consideration to the following three viewpoints: how to select, structure and present the content. All of these and the latter two in particular are closely connected with the question of the actual instructional process and teacher education. We, however, have to limit our study not to concern those questions since the areas we try to cover here are already very large themselves: each of them would deserve an independent study of its own. In spite of this limitation, we are bound to move at a rather general level in this stage of the research, which usually happens when an attempt is made to cover an unexplored area (see e.g. Leino J. 1976).

The selection of the content is a very important process since the "whole" of a language cannot be taught. After the content has been selected it has to be organized in some way for teaching purposes. We shall call this organization-process structuring, which here rather refers to the structure of the content such as it appears in language teaching materials than to the way in which structuring takes place in the actual teaching-learning process. We will use the term in a more restricted sense than Koort (1973), who includes selection and presentation in it as well. The process of structuring has been called grading

(Halliday et al. 1964) and gradation (Mackey 1965), which two terms seem to imply building up a teaching sequence in a linear fashion. Corder (1973) has pointed out the impossibility of such a notion in language teaching, on account of the interrelationships between the different linguistic categories. Presentation refers to the way in which the selected and structured content is communicated in the teaching materials, the way it appears there, questions of the visuality and auditivity of the materials etc.

The problems of the study are as follows:

1. What are the educational (curricular and psychoeducational) aspects that can be made use of in a) selecting, b) structuring, and c) presenting the content of foreign language instruction?

2. What are the linguistic (sociolinguistic, intralinguistic and interlinguistic) aspects that can be made use of in a) selecting, b) structuring, and c) presenting the content of foreign language instruction?

We have of course to evaluate the aspects to see if they are e.g. contradictory and if they yield foundations for criteria that could be used in developing language teaching materials. It would also be interesting to know to what extent they offer any basis for integration with native language instruction and the teaching of other

school subjects as well.

In the following we will first discuss the theoretical background to educational and linguistic aspects after which it will be related to the selection, structuring and presentation of the content. We are aware of the overlap between the problem areas of this study. Making a division like the one we did was, however, necessary in terms of the structure of this paper. The design of this study is shown in Figure 1. We would finally like to point out that this study will only concern the comprehensive and senior secondary school levels in our country.

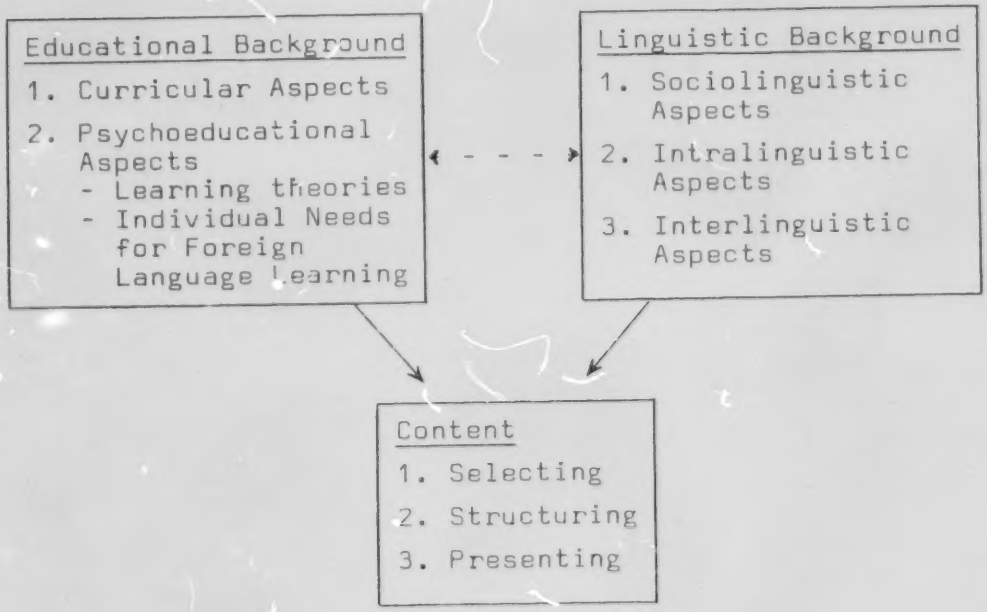


Figure 1. The Design of The Study

The dotted line in the figure represents a relationship that will not be investigated here.

2. Educational Background

As already mentioned, educational background will be divided into two parts, one dealing with curriculum and the other with educational psychology. Curricular aspects can be considered to reflect the view of the society, of which the pupil is a member, on education, while with psychoeducational aspects the emphasis mainly lies with the individual. We are aware of the fact that the former aspect is wider, the latter can be considered to be included in it, since curriculum developers and writers try to make use of psychoeducational information, too. But, again, drawing the distinction is necessary for the purpose of structuring this discussion.

2.1. Curricular Aspects

It is not our purpose to discuss curriculum as a whole in any great depth or length; such a discussion has been provided e.g. by Malinen (1973). The purpose here is only to see some rather general trends of curriculum development in our country and find a place for foreign languages in the general curriculum.

The term curriculum is interpreted in different ways in different countries (CERI 1973). The definitions have been very narrow, consisting only of the contents, or very broad consisting of the plan for the whole educational system (Niskanen 1975). Curriculum in Finland is officially considered to mean a plan guiding education, in which aims, contents, and forms of the pupil's developmental process as well as those of educational and instructional activities are defined (Mietintö 1975). Here curriculum development has mainly been what is called systembased (CERI 1975), which stems from an organisational reform of the entire educational system. A tentative framework for the development of the curriculum as a whole for our educational system has been provided by the first preliminary report of the curriculum planning committee (Mietintö 1975), whose task was to transform the general aims of our educational policy into contents and general methodological principles, which could be made use of by other teams working for the development of curriculum in greater detail. The report on the work of the committee emphasizes the necessity to define general criteria for selecting subject-matter and the priority to be given to each of the subject-matter areas. The importance of defining the general framework of the content of studies having general educational value is as well emphasized. The report also provides us with a rather ex-

haustive list of problems to be investigated in connection with curriculum development. As was mentioned in the Introduction, there is research concerning curriculum development going on in our country, mainly under the guidance of Niskanen (1973).

In order to discuss the content of foreign language teaching from the curricular viewpoint, it is necessary to see the place of foreign languages in the general curriculum. The selection of the content of the curriculum as a whole is very problematic and equally problematic is the relationship between different subjectwise curricula. As far as foreign language curriculum is concerned, it has traditionally been the area of a subject-matter specialist, who may have lacked an insight into the total educational pattern in the country (e.g. Pillet 1974).

The foundations for curriculum can be approached from the viewpoints of society, the individual to be educated and disciplines of knowledge (Niskanen 1975; Whitfield 1971). Niskanen has discussed some of the problems to be encountered if the individual is used as the basis for curriculum development. Whitfield offers a general curricular framework, which attempts to integrate different school-subjects into the total pattern of curriculum on theoretical grounds.

Whitfield uses the realms of public knowledge as a guide, but not the only principle for determing the content of

the curriculum. According to him it is the disciplines of knowledge which provide source material for the development of human abilities and which, in fact, predetermine e.g. the social needs of man.

Whitfield employs Phenix's six hierarchical realms of meaning as a framework for developing curriculum of general education. Those six realms of meaning as well as the areas form which the meanings are derived, are given in the following in the order of increasing complexity: 1. Symbolics (means of communication), 2. Empirics (experimentally verified truths), 3. Aesthetics (contemplative perception and idealized subjectivities), 4. Synnoetics (interpersonal relationships), 5. Ethics and morality, and 6. Synoptics (integrated selfhood). Whitfield emphasizes the development of whole persons as the aim of general education. Wholeness means many-sideness, which will be seen in the curriculum, if the six realms of meaning are used as the basis of curriculum development. He also points out that, though all the realms are our on-going concerns, the achievement of the meanings higher in the hierarchy may not occur until early adulthood.

In order to find out how well the subjects studied in English schools by 9-16-year-olds cover the six realms of meaning Whitfield and his contributors rated the subjects within the six realms. The points (maximum 12) re-

flect the contribution of the subject to the development of each realm of meaning. The main contribution of modern languages (foreign as well as native) was to symbolics (six points). Minor contributions were to aesthetics (one point), synnoetics (two points), ethics (one point), and synoptics (one point).

Whitfield does not discuss the different types of curricula; we, however, received the impression that his approach, at least to some extent, presupposes a subject-centered curriculum. In our opinion, the whole question of the different types of curricula is irrelevant as far as foreign languages are concerned, since they are bound to form a rather independent area within any type of curriculum at least at the lower levels of schooling. This is due to the fact that language is the objective as well as the means of instruction. A closer integration with other subjects which are taught in the native language might well be possible at later stages. This does not of course exclude the possibility of foreign language teachers making use of what has been taught in other subjects, particularly in the mother tongue.

Apart from the theoretical foundations of having foreign languages in the curriculum, their existence is as well justified by the need felt in society for having people who know them. On account of the non-existent interna-

tional status of the Finnish language these needs are particularly acute in our country and the questions of what foreign languages should be taught in our schools, how many of them and for what length of time, ought to be based on those needs. A problem, however, is that we do not have enough information on those needs, since the studies conducted so far (e.g. Roininen 1971) do not cover the whole field. And, we have to admit, even if we had that information available, it might not influence political decision-makers, who have to take other considerations into account as well.

2.2. Psychoeducational Aspects

2.2.1. Learning Theories

This chapter will deal with learning theories, which in general have been grouped into those having 1) information-processing, 2) social-interaction, 3) person and 4) behavior-modification orientation by Joyce and Weil (in Gage et al. 1976). Gage et al. have pointed out that there is a great deal of overlap in this categorisation. The learning-theories in the first group have also been called cognitive learning theories (Good et al. 1977) and, since we are here concerned with the instruction of a subject with a clear-cut linguistic content area, learning obviously involves cognitive processes and it is these theories that will offer us the most relevant framework. In the following we will mainly resort to Ausubel and Gagné and, to a lesser extent to Piaget. The former have based their theories, at least partly, on experimentation carried out in language learning and Ausubel, in particular, emphasizes the importance of facilitating learning at the general as well as specific level. Piaget has concentrated on the development of the child.

Ausubel (1968; Ausubel et al. 1969; Ausubel 1969) has presented two independent dimensions of learning: the reception/discovery and meaningful/ rote dimensions. In reception learning what is to be learned is given to the learner

in its final form, whereas in discovery learning the pupil has to discover it himself. Learning is facilitated if it is meaningful, that is, if new ideas are related in a nonarbitrary and substantive fashion to the learner's existing structure of knowledge, his cognitive structure, at the time of learning. Whether learning is meaningful depends on the nature of the material to be learned, the nature of the particular learner's cognitive structure and the existence of a meaningful learning set in the learner. The meaninful learning paradigm presented by Ausubel is given in Appendix 1.

The first requirement of meaningful learning concerns the logical meaningfulness of the material, which means that the material itself has to be sufficiently non-arbitrary and substantive (non-random) to be relatable to the learner's cognitive structure. According to Ausubel this property of the material which in part determines whether or not it is potentially meaningful is seldom lacking in school learning tasks since the subject-matter content is, almost by definition, logically meaningful (Ausubel 1968 p. 40). The second requirement means that there must be relevant ideas or items in the learner's cognitive structure to which to relate the new material. These ideas, which also in part determine the potential meaningfulness of the new material, must have clarity, stability, generalizability, inclusiveness and discriminability for the

relatability of the new material to increase. In order to provide anchorage in the learner's cognitive structure, it is preferable to use advance organizers, that is introductory materials whose relevance to the learning task is made explicit. Ausubel also recommends the use of comparative organizers that explicitly delineate similarities and differences between two learning tasks in cases when the new material resembles existing knowledge and the learner tends to interprete it as identical to the latter. The third requirement, the existence of a meaningful learning set in the learner, means that he must have the intent or disposition to relate the new material to his cognitive structure. He must actually attempt to do so, which involves motivation and other affective variables of learning.

Ausubel's (Ausubel et al. 1969) hierarchy of meaningful learning consists of the following four types of learning: representational learning, which consists in learning names and word meanings and what they represent, concept learning, which comprises the formation of concepts and the learning of concept names, propositional learning, which concerns learning relationships among concepts combined into sentences (syntax and syntactical relations), and discovery learning, which was already mentioned in the foregoing.

Rote learning takes place if the learner only tries to memorize the new material without being able to relate it into his cognitive structure. The stimulus and response are linked together in an arbitrary fashion which means that only relatively short tasks can be internalized in this way and remembered for short periods unless overlearned. Materials learned in this way are susceptible to interference from similar materials that have been learned earlier or concurrently. Ausubel et al. (1969 p. 45) emphasize that learning is hardly ever simply either meaningful or rote, it is instead more or less meaningful or more or less rote.

Gagné (1970) emphasizes the sequential nature of learning. His hierarchy consists of eight types of learning, of which we shall here deal with only six, since one of them is clearly irrelevant in this connection and two categories overlap.

1. Stimulus response learning consists in learning to make movements of muscles in response to specific stimuli. This type of learning is involved in the pronunciation of foreign words, and in identifying and distinguishing sounds and combinations of sounds.

2. Chaining (verbal associations) means learning chains that consist of syllables and words. It concerns simple chains, like idioms of a foreign language, or associations

between objects and actions and their foreign language equivalents. According to Ingram (1975) even the process of naming in a foreign language is an example of chaining since it involves more than one link. Pictures and/or native language can be used as stimuli for verbal associations. It is possible to use native language words that bear similarity to equivalent foreign language words in the function of mediation. Gagné has pointed out that a chain of nine words is the maximum that can be learned as a single event.

3. Discrimination learning means acquiring the ability to distinguish among a set of stimuli in such a way as to make an appropriate response to each member of the set. It consists in keeping links and chains intact (Ingram 1975). Learning a few chains is relatively easy because they can be distinguished from each other, while learning a great number of new words, e.g., is difficult on account of interference, which is the main cause of forgetting.

4. Concept learning consists in developing the ability to respond to various instances of something by giving the appropriate (abstract) category or name. The concept intended by a new foreign word can be conveyed by the corresponding native language word, which, in many cases, may be insufficient to convey the exact conceptual meaning of the foreign word. Concepts are so closely tied up with culture that their true meanings are only to be

understood within the cultural matrix of the country. In order to learn a new concept properly the pupil should meet it and use it in a representative variety of stimulus situations or contexts, which presupposes discrimination learning. According to Ausubel concept learning in foreign language school learning situation mainly means learning new concept words for concepts that have already been learned in the native language. The question of grammatical concepts has been discussed by Ingram (1975).

5. Rule learning means acquiring the ability to understand relationships between concepts. Gagné means by a rule a chain of two or more concepts. In foreign language learning understanding and producing language, either orally or in writing, requires the use of rules. In this connection Gagné speaks of the rules of grammar and syntax. We know, however, that these rules are not enough. What is also needed is a knowledge of the rules of the use of the language.

6. Problem solving refers to the ability to apply a principle to arrive at a new principle. A typical problem-solving situation in foreign languages would be one in which the pupil wants to express an idea and he will have to use the linguistic means available to him to do so and see whether what he said was appropriate in that situation or not. This can lead to errors or what linguistics call "simplification". Gagné's theory of learning does not mean

that learning sequence takes place from a lower level to a higher one, after which the lower category is not involved at all. It is obvious that in foreign language learning most of the categories are involved simultaneously.

According to Piaget (in Adcock 1976) children of differing ages learn in different ways owing to their intellectual development. In terms of the mental and intellectual development, the 8-11-year-old child is entering the stage of concrete operations. His thought grows from action, he needs a rich variety of concrete experiences. The 11-14-year-old child is entering the stage of formal operations. He is able to think using abstractions, he has intellectual curiosity and he is, e.g. concerned with the possible as distinct from the actual. There are great individual differences between the pupils of this age group.

It is not possible to use the two major theories of foreign language learning, the audio-lingual habit theory and cognitive code-learning theory, as a theoretical framework of this study, because the psychological and linguistic foundations of those theories have proved to be inadequate. Neither of those theories is, in fact, closely linked to any psychological theory of learning (Carroll 1965).

The question of relationship between the learning theories presented above and the taxonomies, particularly those of Bloom (1965) and Bloom-Valette (Valette 1971) will not be discussed here because the latter emphasize the outcomes of teaching rather than the teaching-learning process itself. The taxonomies were originally developed for the purpose of facilitating evaluation. Although the content of teaching is naturally connected with outcomes, its direct relevance is greater to the teaching-learning process itself than to the outcomes.

2.2.2. Individual Needs for Foreign Language Learning

Dealing with human needs in general is beyond the scope and relevance of this article. We shall limit our discussion to concern only the possibility of having individual foreign language needs of pupils as the basis for foreign language courses. The needs of society are considered to be expressed in the curricula.

The idea that foreign language courses should be based on the learners' needs is not a very recent one (e.g. Halliday et al. 1964), but it has aroused a great deal more attention since the start of the project whose purpose was to create on a European scale the conditions for effective language learning by adults (see Trim 1973; 1975). A framework for the study of the needs has been provided for the project by Richterich (1972; 1973; 1975). The idea of the needs of an individual for communication is expressed in "The Threshold Level" develped by van Ek (1973; 1975a, 1975b), as well as "Un niveau-seuil" developed by a team of French researchers (Coste et al. 1976).

Wilkins who has participated in the work of the different teams has published "Notional Syllabuses" (1976), which, in addition to a general background to language syllabus design, gives a checklist of what a learner needs to know. His system is a kind of classification of minimum linguis-

tic capabilities, which should be provided by a core course. The main categories of his system are semantico-grammatical categories, which are very close to the categories of the so-called traditional grammar, categories of modal meaning (e.g. certainty, commitment, intention) and categories of communicative function. Each of the three categories consists of a number of sub-categories. Dealing with Wilkins's system could have been done in connection with the linguistic background of this study, because it is very closely related to linguistics also. Dealing with it at this point is, however, justified because its whole idea is based on individual linguistic needs. The system is rather based on intuition and logical analysis than a firm theoretical background, which means that we cannot be sure of the content validity of the system.

A thorough-going critical examination of system such as it appears in van Ek (1975) has been offered by Ickenroth et al. (1977), whose criticism mainly centres around the lack of criteria in the selection of certain roles, situations and items as well as some basic assumptions behind the whole system. Even though the purpose of the project was to develop an adult language learning system, work has been started to apply ideas to younger learners as well (de Vigili, personal communication). Wilkins (p. 69) himself seems to be well aware of the problems to be encountered in the application of the system to school-level.

One of the main problems in applying the idea of individual foreign language needs as the basis of a course for young students in a school learning situation is how to know what the future needs of our students would be. Passel (1972) has, in fact, pointed out that the number of people, who really need a practical knowledge of a foreign language is rather small. It seems that the lower the level and the younger the students, the more general and all-round the course should be.

Apart from what has been said above there is still one point that has to be made in this connection, and that concerns how to present the foreign culture. It has not been necessary to deal with this question specifically within the project since the target-population consists of guest-workers and other adults who already have familiarity with the culture of the country whose language they are learning. On such an occasion it is possible to build up a language program on a from-day-to-day basis concentrating on the specific needs of the learners such as they appear in their daily lives. This kind of work is being done experimentally in C.R.A.P.E.L. in Nancy (Heddesheimer, personal communication). It seems, however, that the kind of functional approaches that have been and are being developed take some time before they can be applied to school learning situations. Their effects are first felt at the most advanced levels, in language teaching for

special purposes e.g., before they filter down (Riley 1974).

A further point only to be touched upon here is the question of children's individual needs for self-expression in their native language and the extent to which these needs could be made use of in the discussion of the content of foreign language teaching. Children's language development in general has been well mapped out but we lack specific information on the needs of children for self-expression at the time when they start going to school. These needs might be made use of in foreign language instruction.

3. Linguistic Background

Building up a linguistic background that would be relevant for dealing with the content of foreign language instruction is not a very simple task. First of all, there is such a wide variety of linguistic theories that it has sometimes seemed justified to speak about the "jungle" of linguistics (Girard 1972 p. 23). We should also remember that linguistics has moved away from the description of limited areas of language to the description of the much wider unities of function and communication (e.g. Riley 1976; Sajavaara 1975). We will first discuss these wider unities, which are involved in sociolinguistics and after that go on to the smaller unties, which concern intralinguistic as well as interlinguistic aspects. We are aware of the fact that the division we have here made is not completely satisfactory, since e.g. contrasting two languages does not necessarily have to mean that only the limited aspects are contrasted. We will, however, return to this question later on.

3.1. Sociolinguistic Aspects

The realization of the importance of the wider implications of language has brought about the concept of "communicative competence" by which is meant competence for the use of language (Hymes 1972a). The study of communicative competence involves a wide sociolinguistic or "ethnographic" (Gumperz et al. 1972) context, it involves the question of "who speaks (or writes), what language (or what language variety) to whom and when and to what end?" (Fishman 1972 p. 3). It is embedded in the cultural context of the linguistic community. In order to develop a theory that would generate the rules of language use, verbal activities in a linguistic community have to be examined in communicative situations, which can be divided into speech events, which, in turn consist of speech acts. Hymes (1972a) has given the following example to illustrate this point: a party is a speech situation, a conversation during that party is a speech event and a joke within the conversation is a speech act. A profound analysis of the notion of situation in linguistics has been provided by Germain (1973), which will not, however, be discussed here since Hymes's model serves better the pragmatic purposes of this study. For the purpose of further analysis Hymes has divided the speech acts into the following components: form and content message, setting (physical and psycholo-

gical), participants, verbal purposes, key (the tone in which an act is done), channel of communication, forms of speech (dialects, registers), norms of interaction, norms of interpretation and genres (poems, tales, proverbs etc.). It is to be noted that Hymes means by speech all forms of language (written, spoken, sung etc.). In another connection (1972b p. 281) Hymes has pointed out the following four questions that have to be given consideration in describing language use: Whether (and to what extent) something is formally possible (grammatical), whether (and to what extent) something is feasible in terms of the means of implementation available, whether (and to what extent) something is appropriate in relation to the context in which it is used and whether it is in fact done.

The shift from the study of small limited aspects to wider unities is also reflected in the terminological difference that is made between "sentence" and "utterance". Candin (1973) uses the term sentence to refer to "well-formed strings outputted from the grammar" while utterance refers to "units of discourse characterized by their use value in communication" (p. 57). Thus there are, in fact, two kinds of rules for the pupil to learn. Widdowson (1975) has called them "reference rules" and "expression rules". The former characterize what a person knows about the language, while the latter characterize what he does in a communicative situation. Information on the latter will

come from discourse analysis, which means investigation into the ways sentences are are put to communicative use (Widdowson 1973).

In the analysis of the communicative use of sentences, attention is given to the illocutionary force or function indicating element of the sentences (Sinclair et al. 1975), since the misfit between the linguistic form and its communicative function has been recognised. Imperative forms e.g. do not always express orders but can have functions of expressing warnings or giving instructions as well. In the work done by the Birmingham-group (Sinclair et al. 1975) the purpose was to develop a model for analysing discourse. The team started by analysing the English used by teachers and pupils, because they wanted to begin with a form a discourse that would have more structure and direction than normal conversation in which the rights of the participants are equal. Since it is the purpose of foreign language instruction to develop pupils' abilities to participate also in normal conversational situations, the work done by the group is not directly applicable to foreign language school-learning situation at an elementary level at least. The team is, however, widening the scope to include doctor/patient interviews, media discussions, and committee meetings (Coulthard, date not given), and material in the form of structured dialogues, has been produced for foreign language teaching purposes

at the adult level (Johns 1975-76). Since the purpose of sociolinguistic research is to establish rules of communication, it can have direct relevance for foreign language teaching. Sociolinguistic theory, however, exists so far only in a tentative form and the descriptions that have been produced are partial and rare (Roulet 1975 p. 79), which is no wonder considering the difficulties that a researcher has to encounter in trying to draw a representative sample of communicative situations, on which to base his descriptions. At present the difficulties concerning the generalizability of the results seem insurmountable (Corder 1973).

3.2. Intralinguistic Aspects

In spite of great interest in communicative competence it is, however, almost generally acknowledged that linguistic competence is included in it (e.g. Allwright 1976; Candin 1973; Hymes 1972b; Johnson 1976; Roulet 1975; White 1974). Sajavaara et al. (1977) have divided communicative competence into pragmatics, which refers to the sociolinguistic aspect of the concept, and grammatical competence. We are here concerned with grammatical or linguistic competence, which forms the necessary, though not sufficient foundation of communicative competence. We will use the term "intralinguistic" here to refer to purely linguistic aspects within a language such as they appear in observable linguistic data without giving attention to pragmatics. We will resort to the traditional division of language into phonetics, grammar and vocabulary concentrating thus on limited aspects of language, which may help us avoid the pragmatic aspects at least to some extent, though not entirely, since having observable linguistic data available means of course that language has been used for some purpose. Defining "intralinguistic" the way we did implies, at least to some extent, circularily, which we unfortunately could not avoid.

According to Corder (1973a) language is a "constellation of dialects" (p. 64) which are related to each other by

having a major part of their grammatical systems in common. It is this common core that we must try to find information on since it obviously forms the basis of any language course.

The idea of common core implies that the language we teach represents standard dialect, which in the field of phonetics in the case of English means Received Pronunciation. The problems concerning phonetics are minor ones compared to those in vocabulary and grammar. In order to define the common core of vocabulary frequency counts have been resorted to, in which investigators choose a large number of texts of different kinds. Then they count the relative frequency of the number of times certain words occur in the texts. It is assumed that as the result of such counts we would know the most usual words of a language.

There are, however, some limitations and problems connected with frequency counts (See e.g. Engels 1968; Grève et al. 1973; Halliday et al. 1964; Howatt 1974; Mackey 1965; Richards 1970; Wilkins 1972). One of the difficulties concerns the definition of "word"; it is not always clear whether it is used to refer to the grammatical word, the phonological word, the orthographic word or the semantic word (see Swaminalhan 1973). As a result of this confusion the results of frequency counts can be very much

different even when they are based on the sama corpus. Other problems concern the size of the corpus, its representativeness and quality: whether it should be based on written or spoken language or a combination of the two. To compensate for the inadequacies of the frequency counts the concept of range was resorted to (Mackey 1965). It refers to the number of texts in which a word is found. The greater the range of a word the more important its frequency is considered to be.

A French team of investigators (e.g. Gougenheim et al. 1956; Gougenheim 1959; Michéa 1964) were among the first to give attention to the instability of word-frequency counts. When they analysed the frequency-counts carried out on French they noticed that they were all based on written corpus. They decided to use only spoken material. The frequency lists established on the basis of their vast spoken corpus showed that the category of concrete context-bound nouns was insufficiently represented. In order to investigate these words the researchers drew up a list of topics and situations which they used to elicit the most available words for them. Great differences were seen between word lists that were based on frequency counts, on one hand, and studies of availability (disponibilité) on the other. The frequencies of thematic, contextbound vocabulary are stable, if they are based on certain situations, but unstable if based on samples of speech. On the

other hand simple frequency counts are considered to yield reliable results in cases of general, context-free words, such as structural words and the most common verbs, adjectives, adverbs and nouns (e.g. Richards 1970).

The amount of research that has been done in the field of vocabulary is very large compared to grammar. Of course frequency-counts of words give us some grammatical information in cases where structure words are included in the count. And it is these structure words, which establish grammatical relations, that dominate the frequency lists in such cases. The necessity of having frequency lists of structures has been acknowledged (e.g. Grève et al. 1973) but it seems to us that work in this field is only beginning (e.g. Geens 1973, 1974; Wigdorsky 1971).

3.3. Interlinguistic Aspects

It is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper to give an extensive account of contrastive linguistics or to provide a representative bibliography of the vast literature available. An account of contrastive analysis is to be found e.g. in Rusiecki (1976) and DiPietro (1971); in Finland information has been provided by Sajavaara et al. (1975; 1977). We will only touch upon some of the main points of contrastive analysis first on a general basis and after that from the point-of-view of Finnish being the native language.

Contrastive analysis (CA) means the analysis of the similarities and differences between two languages. Before two languages can be contrasted a general framework should be established within which the two languages can be analysed, which is, in fact, a major problem. The purpose of CA is the development of linguistic theory and practical applications. The main area of application has been considered to be teaching materials preparation, ever since the times of Fries (1945) who pointed out that "the most efficient materials are those based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (p. 9). Such an analysis was supposed to reveal

the points that would be difficult for learners. It was assumed that "the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult" (Lado 1957 p. 2). Banathy et al. (1966) have also expressed a similar view according to which that which has to be learned is the same as the differences between the structure of the student's native language and culture and that of the target language and culture. A statement of these differences should serve as the basis of foreign language teaching materials. It was assumed that whenever students come into contact with a foreign language they tend to transfer structures of their own language to foreign language. This kind of transfer is called interference and it means the negative effect of prior learning (native language) on a subsequent learning task (foreign language). This assumption has been seriously questioned by Carroll (1968) for example.

In the early days of CA the purpose was prognostic, an attempt was made to predict what the learning difficulties of pupils would be and design materials to help pupils overcome those difficulties. Wardhaugh (1974) has called this view the strong version of the CA hypothesis, which has been criticised from the theoretical as well as

practical point-of-view. From the former point-of-view, this version demands of the linguist that he has available a comprehensive linguistic theory which deals adequate with syntax, semantics and phonology. It would also require a theory of contrastive linguistics into which the complete descriptions of the two languages could be plugged to produce the correct set of contrasts (Wardhaugh 1974 p. 177). According to Wardhaugh no linguist is in the position to meet these demands in the present stage of knowledge. The inadequacies of linguistic theories have also been noted by others (e.g. Noblitt 1972; Richards 1973). Even if a theory were available, carrying out an analysis over the whole range of syntactic and lexico-semantic features of two languages would be an enormous task. According to Hocking (1973) results of such an analysis would be too massive and complicated to be useful.

From the practical point-of-view the question of the use of predicting learning difficulties was also raised (e.g. Lee 1968; Mackey 1965; Saporta 1966). It was asked whether it is necessary to predict those difficult points where students will make mistakes because they are known to experienced teachers anyway. These question led researchers to what Warhaugh (1974) has called the weak CA hypothesis, which demands of the linguist only that he uses the best linguistic knowledge available to account for observed difficulties in second-language learning. The purpose was

thus diagnostic, the explanation of difficulties. The center of interest was the language produced by the pupil, which has been referred to as interlanguage (Selinker 1971), approximative system (Nemser 1971) or transitional competence (Corder 1967), Research on pupil language has most often been called error analysis though Svartvik (1973) suggests the term "performance analysis" since attention should be given the pupil's linguistic performance as a whole not just the deviant part of it. The amount of work done on error analysis is enormous as can be evidenced by a look at almost any journal dealing with language and learning.

Attention has recently been given to the problem connected with performing an error analysis. These problems center around the following points: what is meant by an error, how to describe and categorise errors, and the most crucial of all, how to explain errors (e.g. Bell 1974; Rocha 1975). In the early days of error analysis most of errors were sopposed to have been caused by the native language, however, today the existence of other causes is more generally acknowledged (e.g. Hammarberg 1973; Lee 1968; Richards 1973; Svartvik 1973). Among these other causes we could mention for example inattention, poor teaching, and forgetting, which may have been caused by what has previously been taught in the same or some other foreign language. In such a case it is the question of poor dis-

crimination learning (Gagné 1970), which makes it impossible to keep verbal chains and links intact. A recent trend in error analysis is the qualitative evaluation of errors, which gives attention to how errors affect communication through the comprehensibility of the message and the relationships between speaker and the listener (Johansson 1973).

In our country a Finnish-English contrastive project is being carried out under the leadership of Sajavaara et al. (1977). The team has published Spoken English (Lehtonen et al. 1977), which is partly based on the findings of research carried out so far. The book is meant for university students of English as well as practising teachers. The approach of the team has differed from that of the traditional CA e.g. through the use of information provided by native speakers of English. The project is continuing and widening its scope to include contrasts of the two languages in a wide sociolinguistic framework, which means e.g. performing discourse analyses on a contrastive basis. This of course presupposes the inclusion of the cultural matrix of the two countries in the analyses.

4. Content of Foreign Language Instruction

In the following we will discuss the question of the content of foreign language instruction in terms of the previously presented background from the viewpoint of the processes of selection, structuring, and presentation. In order to do so we need a matrix that shows us what the levels of language are that we are concerned with. We will use the following framework adapted after Halliday et al. (1965 p. 222):

	Levels of Language			Language in Use	
	Phonology	Lexis	Grammar	Context,	'situations'
Selection					
Structuring					
Presentation					

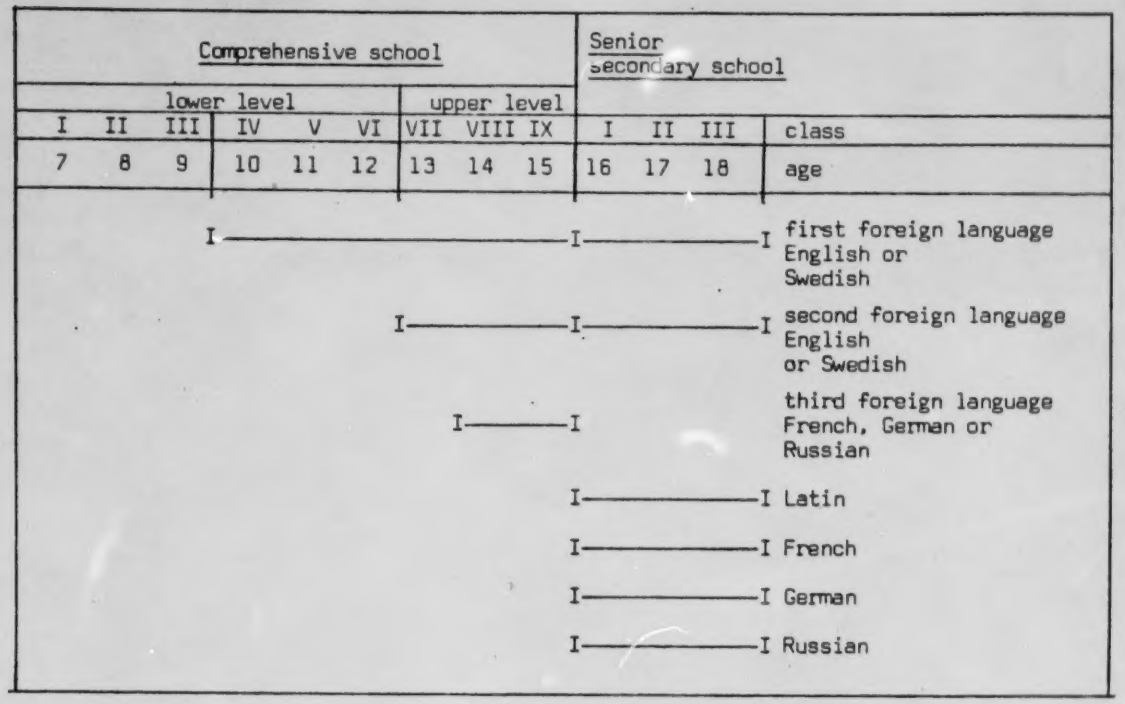
We are aware that the different levels of language are interrelated and interdependent and can hardly be presented as if they were separate units, as in the framework above. From the viewpoint of structuring this discussion the above presentation is, however, necessary. We will not deal with the choice of the register here, because we are concerned with teaching the language to pupils at comprehensive and

senior secondary school levels, in which case it is obvious that the register should represent standard dialect. The question of the register would be more important in situations where the foreign language is taught for special purposes.

4.1. Selecting the Content

We will first examine the process of selection from the viewpoint of educational, that is curricular and psychoeducational, background. The selection of content is determined by purpose, level and length of the courses. That information is provided us by the official curricula. The purpose is expressed in the objectives, the general affective ones as well as the subjectwise ones. The general affective objectives, however, give us no indication as to the content and the same is, by and large, true of the subjectwise objectives, that is the objectives in foreign language instruction proper. The latter are expressed in terms of understanding and producing the language. It is small wonder that the content can't be directly derived from objectives since the same objectives can be implemented by means of very different contents. The curricula are more specific as to the level and length of the courses.

The following figure represents the level and length of the foreign language courses in our comprehensive and senior secondary schools.


Comprehensive school
Senior secondary school
lower level
upper level
I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX I II III class
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 age
first foreign language English or Swedish
second foreign language English or Swedish
third foreign language French, German or Russian
Latin
French
German
Russian

It is to be noted that the third foreign language which is as an elective in the upper grades of the comprehensive School often forms almost a dead end. The few pupils who have been fortunate enough to take it may have difficulties in continuing their studies in senior secondary schools. In some cases they may have to start from the beginning again. It is evident that selecting the content for different levels of each of the above mentioned

courses cannot take place according to the same principles. The lower the level of a course is and the shorter its duration is, the more the language has to be limited to that part of it which it cannot do without. Or to use Mackey's (1965) notion of restrictability, which means the capacity of language to do without certain items, the more we have to concentrate on those things whose restrictability is low.

In addition to the above mentioned information on the purpose, level and length of the courses there are separate sections in the curricula dealing specifically with contents: we are given the number of words to be mastered actively and passively at each level of the comprehensive school as well as lists of structures to be taught. We assume that the figures concerning vocabulary were originally derived from respective curricula in Sweden. There is some research evidence (e.g. Takala 1973; Havola-Pitkänen 1974) to indicate that the figures are too high for heterogeneous Finnish population, whose language is not related to the foreign languages taught in our schools. This has led to the development of a guidebook, whose aim is to specify the basic objectives and the basic content of the instruction of the first and second foreign language in Comprehensive School (Kouluhallitus 1976). No such guidebook is yet attached to the senior secondary school curriculum. We are also provided with some rather general

guidelines as to the context and situations in which the words and structures are to occur.

The process of selection in terms of the psychoeducational background provided by Ausubel means, first of all, that the content should be logically meaningful (see Appendix 1). It seems to us that selection can mainly be based on the structure of language rather than situations, in which the language is used, or the communicative function that language is used for, or the notions that people want to express since it has not yet been provided that the latter have the structure or the hierarchy that would be needed for logical meaningfulness. We do not, of course, mean that the latter shouldn't be made use of in the selection of the content. We just want to point out that according to Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning the main criterion should be linguistic rather than communicative. From the point-of-view of potential meaningfulness selection should be based on the relatability of the material to relevant items in the cognitive structure of pupils. It means that the selection of new content should be based on something that is known and familiar to pupils. Because potential meaningfulness depends on the pupils' prior educational background, age, IQ and social and cultural background (Ausubel 1968 p. 40), it is evident that the process of selection should provide for individual differences between pupils. If it cannot be taken

into consideration in the preparation of teaching materials, it has special implications for teacher education since then it would be the responsibility of teachers to produce additional materials. It is self-evident that the content meant for pupils who represent the stage of concrete operations cannot be the same as that meant for pupils who represent the stage of formal operations. In the past this aspect has been long neglected with the content being nearly the same for pupils who started the foreign language at the beginning of junior secondary school (5th grade of the present comprehensive school) and for those who started it at the beginning of senior secondary school. We could even ask whether we should use frequency counts based on children's language to guide the process of selection for the younger pupils. The theory of meaningful learning also presupposes that the content should create or strengthen a meaningful learning set in the pupils, which means that motivational aspects of the content have also to be taken into consideration. Motivation would of course be created and increased if the selection of the content could be based on the needs of the pupils. This is, however, in our situation rather difficult because at the time of study pupils hardly need the foreign language for any practical purpose outside school and their future needs are not known. The situation is, of course, quite different with

adult learners, migrant workers e.g. We finally want to point out that specifying the basic objectives and content for the comprehensive school level can be dangerous for the motivation of the verbally talented pupils who might be capable of advancing far beyond the bare minimum of the basic things. From the viewpoint of the different levels of language presented previously it seems to us that the educational background has equal implications to each of the levels.

When considering the process of selection in terms of the linguistic background we have to deal with sociolinguistic, intralinguistic and interlinguistic aspects. As for sociolinguistics we have to repeat what we already said before, namely that sociolinguistic theory exists only in a tentative form and the descriptions are rare and sporadic. It seems to us that the contribution of sociolinguistics lies mainly in its emphasis on natural spoken language, on communication, the use of language in different social situations. If language behaviour were (totally) predictable in terms of situations and if we knew what situations are necessary for pupils, we would know exactly what to teach in terms of lexis and grammar. Since this is not, however, the case, the area we are dealing with, is bound to remain rather vague as far as applications to foreign language teaching materials are concerned. We can of course state that when selecting

the content we should give attention to the "functional load" (Stockwell et al. 1965 p. 292) of the items we teach. The functional load means the value certain items have in communication. This is, however, something that we do not have any systematic information on, at least yet. It seems to us that perhaps in the future sociolinguistics might provide us with what Pike (1967) has called the "emic" (p. 37) viewpoint which results from studying linguistic behaviour from inside the system. Emic descriptions would yield us an internal view of the system, which would have application value to foreign language teaching, e.g. in terms of the cultural matrix to be taught.

When examining the intralinguistic aspects of the selection process the level of phonology offers no problems since the restrictability of the phonemes of a language is very low. A language can't be deprived of one of its phonemes without affecting the whole system (Mackey 1965). The problems concern the levels of vocabulary and grammar because the items that are the easiest to do without belong to these levels. In the field of vocabulary we can resort to information available on the frequencies of occurrence of words, their availability and range, bearing, however, in mind the limitations that concern the research carried out. Use could also be made of research carried out by Karvonen et al. (1970), who studied the

native language vocabulary in written production of 9-10-year-old Finnish schoolchildren. In the process of selection we could also, if information were available, give attention to coverage, which refers to the ability of a certain word to displace other words by inclusion, combination, or definition (Mackey 1965). The questions concerning grammatical structures can only partly be answered on the basis of research, since as we previously mentioned, very little has appeared so far in this field.

As for interlinguistic aspects it seems at the present that the contrastive studies published so far in Finland give us very little guidance as to the process of selection. Even if we had contrastive information available, there would be the danger of concentrating too much on points of difference and similarity at the expense of natural, realistic language. Those parts of the language which are the most frequently needed do not have to be the same that are the most different from or similar to the learner's mother tongue (Richards 1973). This kind of concentration would represent an "etic" (Pike 1967 p. 37) approach, which studies linguistic behaviour as from outside the system. We cannot, however, avoid the "etic" approach altogether, since the pupil's native language is a frame factor in foreign language teaching situation after all, and it should be made use of. In addition to that we also have to remember that languages

do not differ from one another in unpredictable ways. Anyone who has learned one language knows a lot about any other language (Wardhaugh 1973). Against this background the sociolinguistic approach to the Finnish-English contrastive project is welcome and hopefully in due course yields information on the selection of the cultural content to be taught at schools.

As for error analyses their results are not directly relevant to the process of selecting the content of foreign language instruction. We have to reject Widdowson's (1975) idea that syllabuses could be devised which actually presented the erroneous forms and only gradually built up the correct standard forms as the course progressed. This is based on the idea that language has to be simplified for teaching purposes by the teacher, and language is simplified by the pupil as well. Pupil simplifications are usually called errors. Widdowson considers that teacher simplification and pupil simplification should correspond to each other. The reasons why this can't be done are so obvious that we will not discuss them here. We simply believe that the suggestion was not meant to be taken seriously.

4.2. Structuring the Content

After we have selected the content it has to be structured, (sequenced and organised) for teaching purposes. At this stage the different levels of language are so closely intervowen that it would be difficult to treat one independent of the others, and besides, the problems concerning the different levels would not be the same. For example, those concerning the sequences at the level of phonology are the smallest on account of the limited number of phonetic items, while at the level of meaning they are the biggest. Similarly it is not very easy to keep information provided by the different theoretical backgrounds strictly apart since attempts have been made to solve problems of structuring from educational as well as linguistic points-of-view. In the following we will discuss structuring from the global viewpoint and after that we will take a closer look on it from a more detailed viewpoint.

In structuring the content a psychoeducational key-concept is that of relatability, which means that the new material can be related to the pupil's existing cognitive structure by means of relevant items in it. If this is done the material becomes potentially meaningful (Appendix 1) for the pupil. In the process of making the material potentially meaningful, use must be made of what is already

familiar and known to the pupil because this provides the point into which the new materials can be subsumed. This would mean e.g. that the cultural matrix at the beginning of foreign language learning could be the child's own instead of being that represented by the foreign language. On the other hand we have to remember that the cultural differences between the western European countries, for example, may not be so large as to justify that procedure. It would also mean that the native language of the pupils can be made use of. The question of advance organizers is difficult since we do not know exactly what they might be in foreign language teaching. This problem would need a thorough investigation of its own. We can, however, suggest that those items, words and grammatical structures that have the highest frequencies of occurrence might also be those that have the greatest generalizability. The less frequent ones would be those that represent details in the system. If the previous assumption is true, we are still left with the problem of what (features of) situations, notions and communicative functions would be those that could serve as advance organizers in case we wanted to structure the course on other foundations than the linguistic ones. In these days it is often the practice to divide the foreign language course into different units, on top of which the objectives of the unit are expressed.

Even though the expressed objectives are important for pupil motivation, it is doubtful whether they can serve the function of advance organizers.

Advance organizers can be comparative ones which delineate similarities and differences between two learning tasks, if the new material resembles existing knowledge and the learner has a tendency to interprete it as identical to the latter (Ausubel 1968 p. 12). The two learning tasks can in this case be either the native language or the foreign language or what has previously been learned in the foreign language and what is learned later on in the same or some other foreign language. Rivers (1968) has drawn a useful distinction between difference and contrast. In her terminology it seems to us that in the former case we would roughly speaking be concerned with differences since Finnish and the foreign languages taught here are not cognate languages, while in the latter case we would be dealing with contrasts. The concept of organizer in Ausubel's theory represents the learner's point-of-view, while Seliger's (1971) concept of discourse organizer refers mainly to the quality of the material itself. The discourse organizer determines, how sentences are combined and interrelated linguistically and semantically. According to Seliger this type of information should be made use of in the preparation of teaching materials. His examples of discourse organizers

concerned chronological and causal sequences of events expressed in connected discourse. We do not have yet enough information on these organizers to be able to judge their value in structuring the content of foreign language teaching. Judging by the examples given by Seliger they are used much the same way in Finnish and the foreign languages taught in our schools. Thus their use could well be transferable from one language to another, they may work like universals which do not have to be taught separately.

From the linguistic point-of-view we have to discuss whether to use the grammatical, situational or notional approach of structuring the content. The grammatical approach which is a sentence-based system with an emphasis on morphology has been the prevailing one for a long time. Using grammatical principles as a way of organizing the content often ends up in texts in which grammatically similar sentences appear together, whereas in real-life communication thematically similar utterances appear together. Grammatical approach emphasises how something is said. The approach that gives attention to the fact the language is always used in social context is the situational one, which organizes the data around situations with the emphasis being on when and where something is said. Here we would have to know the nature of situations and whether all the relevant situations are included. An

important point also to remember is the fact that linguistic behaviour is not always predictable in terms of situations. Sociolinguistic theory has not advanced far enough to help us solve these problems. Foreign language textbooks, published recently in Finland have represented a kind of compromise between the two approaches. In order to emphasise what people use the language for, what they want to communicate, we could use the semantic or notional categorization developed by Wilkins. We have to remember, however, that there is hardly any theory behind it, the concept of notion remains rather vague and finally there is no one-to-one correspondence between the linguistic means and the functions and notions that they express. The same notion or function can be expressed by a number of different grammatical means as well as the same linguistic means can serve many notional and functional purposes. It seems to us that a course based solely on communicative principles would not provide enough opportunity for repetition of grammatical structures to be learned. Koort (1973) has presented some principles of structuring the content of any shcool subject. He has, however, omitted the discussion of the relationships between these principles. It would be useful to know whether the use of one principle necessitates the use of another. It seems to us that if we could use communication as a foundation for structuring the content, our approach in

Koort's terminology would represent unsystematic, holistic and material principles as opposed to systematic, atomistic and formal principles, which would appear in structuring based on grammatical approach. The three approaches discussed above cannot by any means be considered incompatible. The importance of situational and functional approaches is recognised as well as the difficulties inherent in their application from the view-point of learning the basic morpho-syntax (e.g. Freudenstein 1975). In this stage of knowledge principles of each of them should be incorporated in structuring the content (e.g. Marton 1974; Takala 1976).

As for structuring at a more detailed level the question of sequence involves partly the same linguistic principles as selection, that is, the most frequent items having the widest range, availability and coverage should come before the less frequent ones. Other criteria that are given in various connections involve progression from known and familiar to unknown and unfamiliar, from concrete to abstract, from regular to irregular, from easy to difficult, and from similar to different (e.g. Vriendt 1974; Porquier 1974; Mietintö 1970). Most of these can be traced to psychoeducational background. The last two dimensions are often considered to be the same by linguist, who have equated difficulty with differences between two languages. Based on this idea they have developed hierarchies of dif-

ficulties, the best known of which is Stockwell et al. (1965). It is self-evident that the question cannot be solved on purely linguistic grounds. Supposing that we know what is easy and what is difficult, we would still have to consider whether to apply this principle of progression or not. Wouldn't it be better to start with difficult items, because then pupils would have more time to assimilate them (see e.g. Nickel 1971)? A final point that we want to make in this connection concerns the dimension regular-irregular. Very often some irregular forms are the most frequent ones in a language, which means that the concept as such is not directly applicable either.

At a very detailed level we have to ask how to group words: what words are taught together? There are certain groups of words that go together, like those in idioms, or the names of the days of the week or the names of months, even though their frequencies of occurrence may be very dissimilar. The type of learning that occurs with these words, chaining, is best promoted by grouping them together. Using opposition and contrast as a way of grouping has been strongly criticized (see George 1972).

4.3. Presenting the Content

Here we are concerned with the way in which the spoken and written forms of the language are shown to the learner, how the meanings are conveyed to them, and in what way to arrange repetition of old material for learning to take place and be enforced. Here we have to state right away that there is very little, hardly any research done in these fields, so that our task will mainly be limited to introducing some of the problems.

The way in which the spoken and written forms of language are introduced to the learner involves, first of all, the question of how soon to introduce written forms, if the beginning involves only oral work. The length of the purely oral period depends of course on the age of our pupils. The oral period can be longer with 9-year-olds than with 16-year-olds, who are already used to written language in their native tongue and in the foreign language they have studied earlier. Views have been expressed for and against a long oral period. The present tendency seems to be against it (e.g. Smith 1971). In this connection we simply emphasise the great need for research. When the written forms are introduced we have to decide whether they take the form of dialogues, for example, or perhaps ordinary narrative. The use of dialogues is greatly advocated, because they can convey natural spoken language in

a meaningful context (e.g. Dobson 1975). It is quite obvious that at the lower levels we have to resort to contrived materials instead of authentic ones, which would be more suitable for senior secondary school. Authentic materials are those, which are not prepared for pedagogical purposes (Riley 1974). As for spoken forms, our study is restricted not to deal with the teacher's language. Attention should, however, be given to the quality of recorded materials (e.g. drills), the use of which is necessary for developing discrimination learning. A previous article of ours is concerned with this area (Leino 1975). Finally we will note the curious point that in our country recorded materials are outside the control, which is exerted by the National Board of School over other materials used in schools.

In conveying the meaning to the learner we are concerned with the use of contexts, mother tongue, pictures and actions. The context must naturally represent natural, realistic language to the extent it is possible considering the limited linguistic means that are available at the elementary level. On the other hand the importance of context need not be emphasized in cases where learning by rote fashion or chaining is more economical (numbers, principal parts of verbs, the names of the months etc.).

The importance of the mediational role of the mother tongue has greater implications for the use of the materials in the teaching-learning process itself than for the preparation of materials. Traditionally the mediational role has been made use of in the bilingual vocabularies but it could be increased in exercise books and other additional materials. The use of mother tongue as well as pictures has been recommended by Gagné (1970) as stimuli for forming verbal associations in chaining, and we can state the well-established place of pictures at the lower levels, when the children's developmental stage is still that of concrete operations. Very little research has, however, been done on the quality of the pictures so far. In Germany a research project has been started the purpose of which is to evaluate pictures in foreign-language textbooks (Koll-Möllendorff 1975). This project is part of a larger project of textbook evaluation (Müller 1970; Heuer-Müller 1975). What we can only do at this point is to emphasise the need for research and give the following additional references for anyone willing to pursue this line of research in our country (Corder 1966; Spálený et al 1967; Hammerly 1974; Cole 1976; Reinert 1976; Brown 1977). As long as the learner's vocabulary is very small ostensive procedures present the only possibility of conveying the meaning if we do not want to resort to the native language, since at this stage other

words are not available. The use of actions, another ostensive procedure, can also be used for conveying meaning (see e.g. Asher et al. 1974) but its importance is greater for the teaching-learning process itself than for the preparation of materials, apart from possible instructions in teacher's manuals.

The question of repetition concerns how often grammatical structures and words should be repeated for most of our students to assimilate them. Concerning grammatical structures we need information on the use of rules and the relationship between rules and examples. We have to point out that the omission of rules is not supported by cognitive learning theories. As for vocabulary the repetition of words in some textbooks that were used in Finland has been investigated by Falck (1971). Further investigation would, however, be necessary, because we would have to have some general guidelines, which would prevent us from repeating old things after they have been learned; otherwise our chances of introducing new material will be limited. Information would also be needed on a number of new things that can be introduced at the same time. Difficulties can be caused by our pupils' inability to keep verbal chains and associations intact on account of interference caused by poor discrimination. In trying to answer the question, what is the proper amount, we are bound to state that it varies a lot with

individual pupils. Allowances have to be made for these differences. A decision has to be made as to how to present the content that is meant for all pupils, on one hand, and how to present that part of content which is meant for individualization, on the other.

5. Discussion

1. Our purpose was to look for educational (curricular and psychoeducational) and linguistic (sociolinguistic, intralinguistic and interlinguistic) aspects that could be used in selecting, structuring and presenting the content of foreign language instruction. This kind of information is necessary when e.g. criteria for evaluating foreign language textbooks are developed. Our study, which is based on literature and previous research, did not result in anything like clear-cut criteria, but we hope to have increased awareness of the problems and laid foundation for further research.

   In the process of selection we are to some extent guided by the official curricula which specify the language courses and their length in our schools. As for psychoeducational and sociolinguistic aspects there seems to be some conflict. If we base the selection process entirely on sociolinguistic criteria we should select language in actual use, in natural communicative situations. Sociolinguistic theory is still, however, in a very tentative form and does not seem to provide for the prerequisites of logical meaningfulness demanded

by cognitive learning theories. This point would need further investigation. Intralinguistic aspects yield us the traditional criteria of vocabulary selection (frequency, range, availability and coverage), which are also to some extent contradictory (see Mackey 1965 p. 188). Work in the field of grammar has only recently been started, so far there is not yet much information available. The interlinguistic aspects seem to offer very little guidance for the processes of selecting, structuring and presenting the content, in the present stage of knowledge.

In the process of structuring we have to try to incorporate the information offered by different backgrounds. Curricular aspects provide us only with some rather general advice; the main contribution comes from learning theories in the form of advance organizers. What these could exactly be in foreign language teaching materials, would have to be investigated separately. According to sociolinguistic theory structuring could take place around situations or notions, while intralinguistic aspects would offer the grammatical framework. It is obvious that a kind of compromise will have to be sought between these approaches. A further question that has to be asked in this connection concerns the relationship between selection and structuring. To what extent is structuring guided by the

approach used in selection? Does the selection of the content mainly on intralinguistic basis exclude the possibility of using sociolinguistic approach of structuring? We believe this is not the case but it would have to be investigated further.

The area of presentation is difficult and in great need for research as we previously pointed out. A big problem concerns the question of realistic, natural language, How can the language of a textbook be realistic and natural from the very beginning, when the linguistic means available are very limited? We have to accept the fact that the language in textbooks can sometimes be strange and restricted, because provisions have to be made for learning to occur, which may demand e.g. repetition at the expense of the naturalness of the language.

2. Of the limitations of this study we want first to mention the exclusion of specifically dealing with cultural aspects of foreign language instruction. We had to limit the study in this way because the area of culture is very wide indeed (see e.g. Knop 1976; Nostrand 1974; Seelye 1976; Willot 1968). According to Corder (personal communication) cultural aspects will not be very important until we can adopt a truly communicative approach. At the present it seems that

our chances of doing so are rather small. There is, however, another point-of-view, which makes cultural aspects very important indeed and that is integration with other school subjects e.g. history and geography.

Another limitation is the lack of information on the validity of the study, because it is based entirely on literature. In order to know anything about the validity we would have to be able to know how representative the literature is that we used. We assume the validity to be at least satisfactory on account of the deliberate attempt we made to pick the most important sources, that is those which were mentioned the most frequently. There is, however, no hard data available on this. In addition to the use of literature we also had contact with people working in this field. The fact that we ended up in some conflicting ideas is natural, deciding which are weightier than others is the task of further research.

3. This paper will be used as a theoretical background to subsequent empirical research on some of the problem areas which were outlined here but which will be specified later. It thus seems to us that we contributed mainly by increasing awareness of the problem.

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Appendix 1

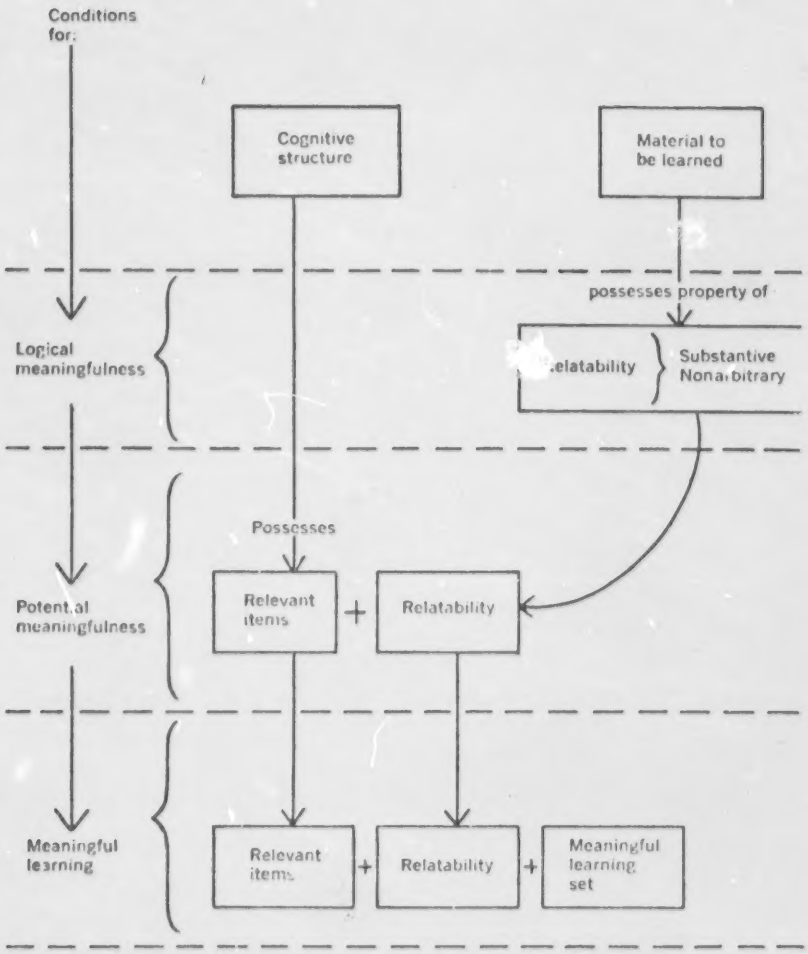

FIGURE 1 *Schematic representation or requirements for logical meaningfulness, potential meaningfulness, and meaningful learning.*

Ausubel(1968p55)

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